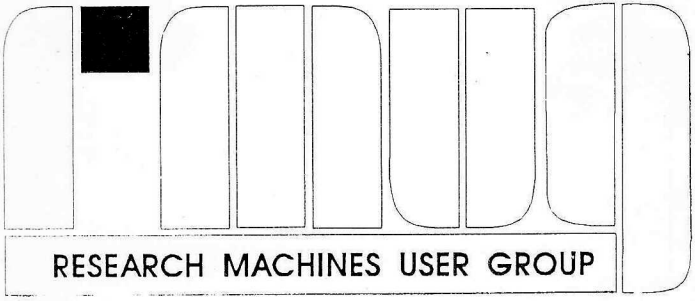
# RM User

Volume 9:1
May 1994



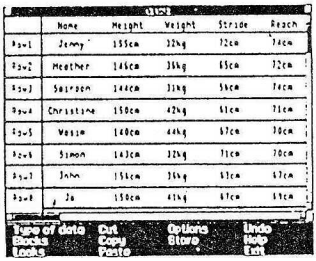
New from SPA

# SPARKS

## SPA WORKS

A highly versatile data handling program – Spreadsheet, Database and much more.

*And... include PaintSpa pictures!*




### For the beginner

- Menus like WriteOn and PaintSpa
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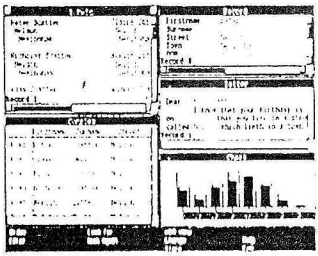
- Grows up with the user



### More advanced users

- Multiple windows onto your data
- Easy WYSIWYG database design
- Full set of functions

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SPA

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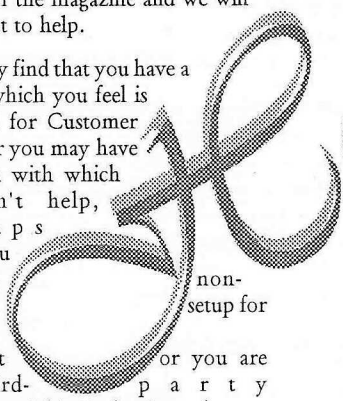
Send for more information

# HelpLine

The User Group exists to help its members use the computers which they have.

The magazine is the main way in which we communicate with our members. If you find that it's not covering the areas you want to know about then phone someone listed at the back and let them know what you would like to see; the chances are that you won't be the only person who has the same needs.

Many of you (about 20%) are home users of Nimbus computers and we would like to help you. Do please phone any of the people whose numbers are listed at the back of the magazine and we will do our best to help.




You may find that you have a problem which you feel is too trivial for Customer Support or you may have a problem with which they can't help, perhaps because you have a non-standard setup for your equipment or you are using third-party equipment. This is the time when we may be able to help.

Remember that you can telephone the User Group members in the evening or at weekends when RM is shut (and, of course, you are just bound to hit problems). Also, RM don't claim to have great knowledge of products which they don't produce such as Excel or PageMaker. They can tell you how to install the packages on their equipment and how to get started but they cannot be expected to give you in depth support on using the packages. We, on the other hand, can. Most of the people whose phone numbers are listed at the back are using a range of software which is probably the same as yours on a daily basis. We may have met exactly the problem you have just encountered.

If you are in difficulty, please ring anybody on the Committee (numbers at the back) and you may also phone Tim Phillips on 0284 706623 (home number).

It is a great help if you are having a problem doing something using your computer if you can be next to it when you phone because it may then be possible to talk you through a solution over the phone.

If your problem is not urgent, or you think it may be difficult to explain over the phone, then do please write to the Editor with your query. I will either reply to you directly or pass your query on to a better person to solve it or publish your letter in the next magazine as a request for help.

If you have had a problem which you have solved for yourself then please share your knowledge; your solution is quite likely to be useful to someone else, even if you think it is trivial; remember that many of our members are new to using RM equipment.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## Deadlines for the next issues

| | |
|---|---|
| RM User 9:2 | 24 June 1994 |
| RM User 9:3 | 12 September 1994 |
| RM User 9:4 | 14 November 1994 |
| RM User 9:5 | 16 January 1995 |
| RM User 9:6 | 6 March 1995 |

The date shown above is the *latest* date for copy for the magazine. You will normally receive the magazine about 2-3 weeks after the date shown.

## Missing a Magazine?

Back issues of the magazine are available from the editor. Write to RMUG, 46 Ollgar Close, Shepherd's Bush, London, W12 0NG for more details.

# News and Editorial

If you've seen the Tesco "Computers in Schools" offer then you may have wondered if it's worth collecting the tokens, given that the equipment all seems to be for use with Acorn computers. The good news is that quite a few of the items will work with any computer, including the JP150 printer, the multiscan monitor, the overlay and concept keyboards and the packs of discs. The printer comes with a lead which can be used with M or Series computers but if you want to use it with a PC186 then RM will supply a suitable lead completely free. There are more details available on the way in which you can benefit from the Tesco scheme and most schools should have received details by now - if you haven't (or you don't work in a school) then contact RM on 0235 826868.

RM's Window Box comes with a special font, Sassoon Primary, which is specially designed for young children. If you don't have a Window Box but would like to use the font then it is available from Adrian Williams on 0737 645864. The price varies depending on how many users you want it for but the base price is £50 and there is then a further charge of £2 per computer.

Many schools have been building up networks slowly and have really come to the limits of what they can do with their X-Series servers but they may not be able to afford to go to Net LM; the cheapest server is about £10,000 by the time it has been installed which is a lot of money if what you really want to do is just add a few more stations. RM have now announced the release of Net 3.2 - this gives a server based on an S-Series 486/25 with 340Mb hard drive, 8Mb of memory, 1 ethernet card and the standard Net 3 software library. It is possible to add more ethernet cards to the server if necessary but this would allow you to add more stations to your current network. You can keep an existing server on the same network provided that you can fit an ethernet card to form a backbone (Net 3.2 does not support Z-Net but routing is pre-installed to allow you to set up two servers easily). I think this is a welcome development for people who do not need (or cannot afford) to move to Net LM. The server is priced at £4,295 - more details direct from RM.

Cumana have launched an MPC CD ROM upgrade suitable for X or Series computers. It includes a dual speed CD ROM drive, Soundblaster Pro card, mains powered speakers, microphone and 5 CDs (Hutchinson Encyclopedia, Interactive Periodic Table, Introduction to Classical Music, 1992 Daily Telegraph and World War II Archives) It costs just £349 for an internal drive or £449 if you need an external drive and is good value. Cumana are also supporting the use of the parallel port CD drive which is available through the Tesco scheme. More details from Cumana on 0483 503121.

MUSE is an organisation which has supported the use of computers in schools for over 21 years and was instrumental in introducing computers into education by exerting considerable influence on government thinking. In April, however, MUSE formally joined with the Computer Education Group to form a new organisation to provide a good basis for future support of information technology in all areas of education. If you are interested in what they do then CEG can be contacted via the CEG Treasurer, Staffordshire University,


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School of Computing, Beaconside, Stafford, ST18 0AD. Membership costs £12 per year and a complete set of the last 6 issues is also available for £12.

RM have now made Information Workshop available for use on networks (both Net 3 and Net LM). If you've not seen it before, then it's a Windows based data handling program which is particularly suited to schools. It can be customised for different levels of use. You can store pictures in the database and it is very easy to produce graphs from numerical data. Included in the pack are coursware support materials. A 16 user licence costs £299.

Music Explorer is a Windows based compsing package that provides four carefully desinged levels of access so that beginners can explore easily but more advanced pupils can use sophisticated composing techniques. The pack includes support materials which cover composing, listening, performing and skill development in areas of music such as rhythm, melody, harmony, texture, tone-colour and timbre. It will work with any Windows 3.1 based computer with a sound card and costs £149 (or £199 if you need a sound card).

A new addition to RM's hardware is a colour 486 notebook; the base model is a 33MHz 486SX processor with 120Mb disc and 4Mb RAM for £1849, rising to a 33MHz 486DX with 200Mb disc, 8Mb RAM and Microsoft Office Professional (Word, Excel, Powerpoint and Access) for £2499. It's not long ago that two and a half thousand pounds just about bought a decent desktop - now it buys a superb notebook complete with enough software for most people's needs!

I've mentioned CWDE Software's World Development database before but until now it's only been available in Grass or Key format. Now the data pack (which includes 16 social and economic indicators from 129 countries with populations of more than 1 million together with teachers' notes and Geography and Mathematics coursework on photocopiable masters) is available in CSV format which can be read by just about any data handling program (including Excel, Superbase, Access, FlexiData, Quest etc.) It costs £35 for a single user or £65 for a site licence. More details from Elizabeth Segall on 071 831 3844.

If you're looking for desktop publishing software then until recently you have only had a choice of easy to use packages like PagePlus or Microsoft Publisher or professional packages like Aldus PageMaker. The other difference is price - PageMaker costs nearly £500. Aldus are now "fighting back" - they have just released PageMaker Classic (which is essentially PageMaker 4 with a few minor bits removed and some new filters added) for £60. PageMaker is worth investigating if you ever put together booklets of more than a few pages. Given that it's now only slightly more expensive than PagePlus I'd buy it without hesitation for anything other than a single page with very little text. PagePlus has the most idiosyncratic text handling I've ever met and its concept of styles is far removed from any other DTP program!

The CD ROM user group publishes a monthly newsletter which contains reviews and information about CD ROMs and includes a wide range of special offers (it was from them that I bought the Grolier Encyclopedia for £25 recently). Membership costs £30 per year and more details are available from them at 48 Ashdown Road, Bexhill, East Sussex, TN40 1SE Tel: 0424 730326


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# RM User Group - Annual General Meeting

*Ian Burgess*

My first task is to thank all the members of the committee for all their hard work and support and then to thank you, the members, for making this task so enjoyable. The committee meets 4 or 5 times a year to discuss activities for the User Group and to organise the Training Weekend. They are also all involved in providing the Helpline service which is used by an increasing number of people with all sorts of queries, ranging from the easy to answer to the more obscure. Remember, the phone numbers are published in the magazine and you are welcome to use them to get help.

Our sincere thanks go to Steve Rochford for his hard work as magazine editor. The magazine is full of useful tips, interesting articles, advice and a forum for the exchange of views.

At the AGM two years ago a questionnaire was given out, asking for your views about what the User Group was doing at the time and what you would like it to provide. One of the points that came across clearly was a desire for more training. We provide this, in part, through the Training Weekend and the 1993 weekend at Stevenage was a great success but we are also looking for other, low cost ways of offering training. This afternoon will be an opportunity for you to work in small groups on a topic of your choice. The 1994 Training Weekend will take place this year in the Novotel in Nottingham from 21-23 October. Full details will be announced later but now is the time to make known requests for topics you would like covered and to try to find funding for it.

Membership of the User Group remains at about the 500 mark. Each year we gain some new members and lose others. Of those who leave and respond to the letter asking why they have left, many say that they are happy with what the Group provides but they no longer wish to be members because they have stopped using RM computers. There are others, however, that we are obviously not serving as well as we could. In particular, the growth of use of RM computers in primary education means that we need to do more to cater for this sector.

We need to ask the question "Are we worth the subscription?", and the answer to this is definitely "Yes" but we must not be complacent. The Dearing review and all of its implications for IT means that the role of the IT specialists is changing in schools and we must continue to support them but we must not lose sight of the fact that only a proportion, albeit a large one, of our members our teachers. The committee is very aware that we must provide for all our members.

Self help is a feature of all User Groups - even today we need to be a forum for the sharing of ideas, information and skills and I hope that you will all feel that you have something to contribute to the User Group - both today and throughout your membership.

All committees need an infusion of new blood from time to time - not only so that fresh ideas may be aired but also so that older members may retire in the sound knowledge that their good work will be carried on. The User Group committee meets 4-5 times a year, normally on a Saturday or Sunday,

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typically starting at 11am and working through lunch to finish at about 2pm. Meetings are at a location chosen to be convenient to the majority (for the past few years it has been in Oxford; almost within sight of the old RM factory and, therefore, convenient for the station!). If you would like to get involved in the committee then you would be most welcome (*note that this is still true- even after the AGM. If you would like to find out more about what the committee does then please phone any of the officers listed in the back of the magazine.)*

Helen Williams came to us as Treasurer 5 years ago and quickly managed to organise the accounts and has managed to keep everything under excellent control ever since. She retires from the committee this year because the constitution only allows members to serve for five years. John Williams became Secretary 4 years ago and has also worked conscientiously to organise the work of the committee. He has now also spent a total of 5 years on the committee so he retires as well. Our warm thanks go to both of them and we do hope that they will continue to be involved in the Group.

## Formal Business

### Officer Elections

| | |
|---|---|
| Chairman: | Ian Burgess |
| Vice-Chairman: | Phillip Fox |
| Treasurer: | Hugh Wilding |
| Secretary: | Mary Mabey |
| Membership Sec: | Maureen Wernham |

### Subscription Charges

The subscription charge has remained unchanged for many years even though all costs associated with running the group have increased. After much discussion it was agreed to set the new subscription charge at £18 and to allow members to request extra magazines for £6 per year: ie - normal subscription brings one copy of each magazine and costs £18. £24 pays for two copies of each magazine, £30 pays for three copies and so on.

### Remuneration

The Editor's remuneration has been unchanged for some years at £250 per issue. It was increased to £275 per issue.

# Statement of Accounts

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Balance Brought Forward 1992-1993 | | 5195.65 | |
| | | **Income** | **Expenditure** |
| Membeship Fees | | 7,275.25 | |
| Training Weekend | | 1695.18 | |
| Bank Interest | | 11.32 | |
| Bank Charges | | | 90.90 |
| RM User | Advertisers | 542.00 | |
| | Printer | | 3,434.50 |
| | Editor | | 1,500.00 |
| | Articles | | 550.00 |
| | Postage & stationery | | 1,173.98 |
| Expenses | | | 1656.14 |
| Advertisements | | | 338.40 |
| Stationery | | | 354.60 |
| Freepost | | | 126.36 |
| | | 9,523.75 | 9,098.52 |
| Balance Carried Forward | | 5,620.88 | |

# Training Weekend 1993

| | **Income** | **Expenditure** |
|---|---|---|
| Delegates Fees | 11,864.50 | |
| UCLES Sponsorship | 545.00 | |
| Profit from previous weekends | 53.87 | |
| Interest | 18.77 | |
| Auction | 602.50 | |
| Hotel | | 9,076.20 |
| Presenters' Fees and Expenses | | 1,463.38 |
| Leaflets and Postage | | 252.02 |
| Transport | | 135.83 |
| Photocopying | | 50.00 |
| Insurance | | 150.00 |
| Network Leads etc. | | 262.03 |
| | 13,084.64 | 11,389.46 |
| Balance | 1695.18 | |

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# CD-ROMS

*John Marsh*

CD-ROMS are the big thing in I.T. today, and even though many of the 'computer prophets' say this won't last and other things will take over (instant satellite connection to enormous databases from anywhere in the world?) we might as well make the best use of it whilst it is still here.

As an aside this opens up many questions as to how much we should keep up with the rapid growth in Technology. Should we be always looking to buy the latest, biggest and fastest machine around? Should we be aiming to upgrade our networks every two years? Should we always have the latest versions of the software: Word 6, Excel 6 etc.? And if you say yes then you certainly need newer machines as the older ones won't run them satisfactorily. One of the arguments many of us (including RM- see their latest survey) have used for buying PCs is to prepare students for what they will meet after schools and is this more likely to be Word 6 and Excel 6 than Word 2? And what is everyone doing with their 186s. I would like to hear colleagues thoughts on this.

We now have in school 4 stand-alone CD machines and a CD server running on Net-LM and I would like to pass on some thoughts as to the usefulness of some of the CD titles we have bought in the hope that others will do the same as the difference in quality is very variable.

1. The new **Microsoft Encarta** is an excellent CD and is the most used CD in the Library and is well received by the pupils who need little or no instruction as to its use. It is also a more realistic price compared to version 1. A must for everyone and buy sound boards if you haven't already.

2. **Microsoft National Gallery** is very popular (especially the nudes with Year 7!), very easy to use and you can print almost everything including the pictures.

3. **Bradford's Electricity and Magnetism, Earth and Universe, and Energy** are three very good CDs for use by the Science department and are very simple to use.

4. **Information Finder** is one of the CDs that now come with a CD server and is a large text based encyclopaedia which is simple to use and packed with facts.

5. **Oxford English Dictionary v2** also comes with a CD server and is an amazing CD whole school resource of special interest to A-level English Language students.

6. **Changing Times** arrived yesterday for use in the Library and was requested by the History Department. It covers 200 years of world history and contains over 7000 articles and thousands of photographs, maps etc. It is very simple to use and pupils should cope with no instruction (surely what we want from a CD).

7. **World War 2 by Attica** also arrived yesterday in the library having been requested by the History department. I looked at it with our librarian and we both agreed very quickly that it is one of the worst CDs we have ever seen. Not because of the raw content which is excellent but the presentation and interface both of which leave an enormous amount to be desired, especially as we had just looked at the previous CD. The screen is cluttered


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with icons - some of which are not immediately obvious and some of which do not do what they always do in other similar programs.

The CD contains many animations which are so small and slow as to be almost useless; and this is not a fault with our equipment as the animations in Encarta which are bigger and clearer run perfectly all right. I sincerely hope that the authors look very soon at, for example, Encarta and Changing Times and a new version, of what could given the content be a superb CD, is soon released.

8. **The Times and The Guardian** are also available in the library but the Librarian is increasingly worried about the high price.

9. **Auto Lire** is a French resource CD containing over 700 authentic French texts with pictures and sound. It is advertised as being for Years 10 and 11 but our French department feel it is more suitable for 6th form work. It is easy to use, is well used and with a sound board can be used for individual study or with small speakers a whole group can gather round the machine which is how our linguists seem to prefer it.

10. **ECCTIS** is running on two machines in the Careers Centre and is in great demand at certain times.

11. **The Software Toolworks Illustrated Encyclopaedia** still gets a lot of use in the library when Encarta is not available. Lots of text and pictures etc.

12. **Anglo Saxons** is another CD we got with our CD Server and it is of course an excellent CD with some wonderful graphics.

13. The latest version of the **PDSL shareware CD** is incredible value if you can afford the time to look through it and are interested in exploring the shareware scene. There are some excellent programs on it which could be used in schools and colleges or at home. The programs are all compressed and are equivalent to 1.2Gb of software.

14. We have about another 10 CDs: Mammals, Library of the Future, Timetable of History, etc., all of which are useful at certain times.

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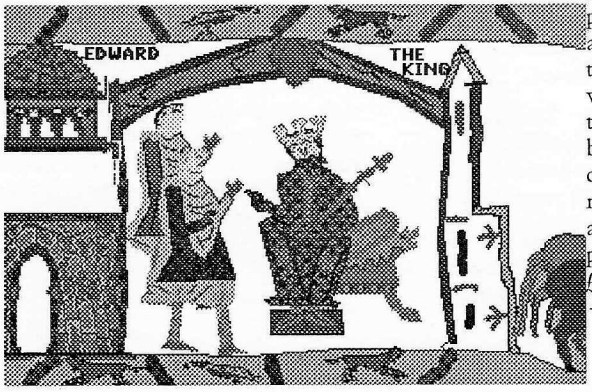
*Attica have produced some good CD ROMs in the past so it was disappointing to read John's comments about the World War II disc. The CD-ROM section on CIX has contained quite a few comments about it recently but most have concerned the price - at over £100 it's not cheap (Encarta costs about £60 and I've just bought the 1993 Grolier for £25) and given that its main market is likely to be schools I think that it's too expensive. I know that it costs a huge amount to assemble all the data but CD ROM has now reached the point where lots of people have drives and are looking for good discs to use. At less than £50 many people will buy something on the offchance that it will be good - at over £100 I think fewer people are prepared to take the risk. The newspapers are in the same position with regard to price but with even less justification - all their text is already on computer. I know that it has to be indexed but I would have thought that that was essentially automatic.*

# More SPA Programs reviewed

*Maureen Wernham*

This month I have been investigating **Bayeux** and **PageLink** programs from SPA. **Bayeux** is a program that can be used in conjunction with Paintspa, Writeon, Banner and Newspaper (one of these is essential for this program to be used at all) and as its name implies it is the artwork from the Bayeux tapestry. It automatically puts you into Paintspa if it is started with the command *Bayeux*. This gives the usual Paintspa screen and by entering the Store a list of the Bayeux pictures appears. They are in colour and can be *fetched* and manipulated in the usual way, using *Overlay* when more than one Bayeux picture is required on the screen. This way of using the program allows the production of Paintspa pictures and they can be printed as usual. The manual suggests that each *group* of pictures that are supplied should be printed out so that the appropriate figures and animals can be chosen easily (each figure has its name beside it). I found this to be very useful when I produced a banner. Below is a printout of one example screen supplied.

However by using the program with Banner, pictures can be *fetched* and *pasted* producing something similar to the tapestry itself, especially if a colour printer is available. Probably the most useful way Bayeux pictures can be incorporated into a piece of work or project is in conjunction with either Writeon or Newspaper. Pictures could be fetched directly into the Writeon page or from a previously designed Paintspa picture. With Newspaper the pictures are cut out in the same way as Library pictures. To avoid a pupil having to change directories to reach the Bayeux pictures it is advised that the group ones are added to the Newspaper library. This seems to be a very sensible idea especially as this program is likely to be used by the younger age groups. The *Getting Started with Bayeux* leaflet explains exactly how it can be used with each of the above programs. As all the pictures can be saved out of Paintspa in PCX format as well, it is possible to use them as clipart if they are then loaded into a Windows Graphic program such as Paintbrush and *cut* from there into Word or whatever is your favourite word processor. This is how the above picture was achieved. The manual is very useful with a step by step guide to creating a picture. It also contains an interesting history of the Bayeux tapestry. This would be a good program to use in a History project but my Junior school contact tells me that it is not in their curriculum at the moment which is a pity. The program costs £19 or £49 for 16 users +VAT.

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The second program that I have been trying, called **PageLink**, is exactly that, a way of writing pages for a book with links to other pages, similar to the Dungeons and Dragons branching books. It comes with an example 'Bound' book that can be printed out or used on the screen. This book, written by two 11 year old children, is an example of an adventure type game, which inspired me to try one out myself. I had previously written one using Excel, the choice of the branch taking you to another area of the spreadsheet. PageLink is certainly much easier to use as it is set up with the function keys as the choice buttons. There are four spaces attached to these keys that can have up to 35 character messages in them. As the links are produced the page numbers have to be entered as well so that when the bound book is printed the choice is made by turning to the appropriate page. A page can contain either a picture (Paintspa) or text. The picture can be attached to the next page of text or can contain the text itself. All the pages can be altered, viewed and printed in draft form at anytime.

It is necessary to work out the branching well before starting, but links can be altered at a later stage if they go wrong or if other pages need to be inserted. The program could easily be used by a group as long as each person's area of work is well defined. The Paintspa pictures must be drawn in advance and are slightly smaller than the usual picture size. To help with this a frame is included that can be fetched onto the Paintspa screen and pictures can then be confined to this area. It can also be used to pick out part of an existing picture. A picture can be incorporated into the title page of the book. I found it very easy to use once I followed my plan of the adventure. Another way it can be used is illustrated by some draft pages that are included. These are called "What's My Tree" and ask questions about the tree that the pupil is trying to identify. Each page asks another question until finally a name for the tree is suggested. I can visualise this method being used in Junior Science, if the teacher is prepared to work it all out. The main use though will be by the pupils themselves to create a book. However my Junior contact tells me that this sort of work was used in English but has fallen out of favour. Perhaps this program will help to promote the incorporation of IT into Junior English lessons, getting away from just word processing. As foreign characters can be used there may be an interest in other lessons such as French. It costs £25 or £69 for 16 users +VAT.

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# Technical Tips

*Stephen Sharrad*

## Call to Port

The PC186 has as normal two serial ports (if the second or AUX port is not being used in Piconet mode), and these are normally addressed as COMA and COMB by the operating system. The main serial port is also defaulted to be PRN.

The Low cost parallel port (if fitted) is addressed as LPT0. Any parallel piconet modules are LPT1-LPT8. Any serial modules become COM1 to COM8. The Data Comms card may also become COM1 and COM2 (in SETPC IBM mode).

However, Windows 3 was originally designed for a standard PC clone and on a normal PC devices COMA and COMB do not exist. (These IO devices are specific to MSDOS 3.10).

This means that even on a PC186 version of Windows 3.0, the second serial port (labelled AUX/PICONET) cannot be immediately by the system. (The first serial port is accessed as PRN.

If a data comms card is fitted, then the [nimbus] section of the file WIN.INI needs to be modified. Note that if this is done, the serial piconet modules become unavailable to windows. Modify the [nimbus] section to set COM1 and COM2 to equal DCC (as the note in the ini file mentions).

However, there is a way to make the second serial port available. Under the [ports] section in WIN.INI, lines can be inserted to make the COMA and COMB (and therefore the aux) ports available to Windows.

A typical [ports] section for a standalone PC186 WIN.INI file would therefore look something like this:

```
[ports]
; A line with [filename].PRN
  followed by an equal sign
  causes
; [filename] to appear in the
  Control Panel's Printer
  Configuration dialogue
; box. A printer connected to
  [filename] directs its output
  into this file.
; LPT0 is specially for the
  PC-186 low cost parallel
  printer port
LPT1:=
LPT2:=
LPT3:=
COM1:=9600,n,8,1
COM2:=2400,n,8,1
PRN:=
LPT0:=
FILE:=
; The appletalk line is not
  required
AppleTalk:=
COMA:=
COMB:=
```

The last two lines ("COMA/COMB") have been inserted. Use Control Panel to switch output to these ports for any particular printer. Make sure the port is not inactive by clicking on the "active" selector in control panel. This basically means that you can now use both the main and auxiliary printer ports. Baud rate/parity settings for these ports can be altered by the control panel or permanently by CONFIG. If you have a serial piconet attached this will be address as COM1. You cannot use the AUX port if an internal serial piconet is connected.

## RM Prices

I am disappointed to see that the prices

of components for PC186 systems have suffered severe price increases. RM's spring catalogue for Accessories, Software and Peripherals on Page 25 lists the PC-186 options and upgrades still available. An IBM Mode Utility Board now costs £99 (compared to £69 originally). These price increases are not directly RM's fault. As I was informed by Steve Rochford (who just happens to be the editor of this magazine), because RM only produce relatively small amounts of PC186 options (i.e. Utility boards are not made in their thousands and probably not in multiples of many hundreds) therefore their price is proportionally more expensive.

Also, the new catalogue lists Windows Draw! again, (mentioned in the last Tech Tip article) this time actually as a PC186 Option. However, Windows Draw! does NOT run on a PC186. I have been in contact with RM, and RM have recognised it as a slight mistake in their catalogue which they will rectify.

### When is a baud rate not a bit rate?

In general, most people believe the baud rate to mean "bits per second." This is however, not precisely correct. A modem may be used to take digital information from a computer but this information is firstly converted into a modulated analogue signal. Because of the bandwidth of the telephone exchange (300Hz-3.4kHz or 3.1kHz bandwidth; a simple AM signal would have a bandwidth far in excess of this (i.e. 40kHz)) the analogue signal must be altered to be of the differential Phase Shift Keying (PSK) type, where a difference in phase of the analogue signal represents a change in the data type. This means that the BAUD rate represents the rate of change possible of the phase changes, whereas the BIT rate is the actual transceived data rate. If a one bit code is being transmitted (i.e. values can be 0 or 1) then the bit rate will be the same as the baud rate. To further complicate matters, modern communications often use two bit binary codes (i.e. values could be 00, 01,10,11. This means that two bits of data are transmitted simultaneously. These are known as dibits, and are used for example in V22 bis. Because the dibits could be upto 4 different values, then 4 types of phase need to be allowable) then one phase position could mean two bits of data. It can then it can be seen that the BIT rate and BAUD rate can often be different. For V22 bis, if the baud rate is 1,200 then the actual bit rate will be 2,400 bps (bits per second) as two bits of data would be transmitted for every baud/cycle. Other modem standards allow for 4-bit data (quadbits) and require upto 16 different phase types. For these, the signal is also severely amplitude modulated to increase transfer reliability.

However, as this is rather complex, most data transmissions speeds are measured using the baud rate. Modern modems should be able to cope with at least 2,400 baud (and this is the highest speed many telephone lines will cope with; 4,800 is too fast). However, it allows us to see why V32 is faster than V22 because V32 uses more phase types to transmit quadbits (so 4 bits of data are transmitted simultaneously). There also used to be a time when modem speeds would reach a massive 300 baud (!). This would mean that your average log-on to a bulletin board (such as RM's) would take about nine times longer than present.

### Xpress Problem

This program is commonly used by those on the move to work out road routes, distances and approximate travel

times. Or it can be used simply and quickly to find out where in the country a particular town or place is and print out a map of its surrounding area.

I cannot give a definite YES or NO answer to whether or not the (DOS) program actually runs on a PC186. I have tried it on a PC186 fitted with a utility board and have found that to use the program you must:

a) Install the program with the original IBMulator (Version 1 of IBM support, IBM.EXE).

b) Run ROUTE.EXE. A configuration screen appear. You can install the printers and also a mouse. (Although IBM does not support a mouse SETPC as used later does. Install the Microsoft compatible mouse).

c) Exit the configuration program. A map of Britain will now appear. You will notice that even by PC186 standards the screen redraw will be dog-slow. Cursors can be used to move the screen pointer but the mouse will be inoperative.

d) You can use the program again in the future but in order to use the mouse and improve the speed SETPC emulation can now be used. Run ROUTE.EXE. The map comes up straight away (the configuration screen can be called up by an option on the map screen). Notice that in order to change any of the configuration details you will need to run the IBMulator. The configuration utility crashes on exit if SETPC is used.

This roundabout way of using the program will of course be only for those who are really desperate to get it going on the PC186. However, the maps/screen dumps from a PC186 are still reasonable and so it is not a complete waste of time.

And just to conclude, if anybody is interested in purchasing any PC186 systems (complete with harddisks and other nice bits) please contact me on Henley (0491) 577149. Of course, if anybody also required technical help with any RM system then please contact the same number.

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# Creative Writer

*Review by David Palmer*

Microsoft has thrown their cap into the home/children's software arena with the release of hte Creative Writer text processor with a stimulating environment which allows the user to mix text and graphics in a sensible, user-friendly manner, including a context-sensitive help system with a number of cartoon characters who pop up with helpful comments and error messages.

The style of this product is good: it has lots of potential. But some criticism of Microsoft's inconsistent use of menus applies here' too. Formatting and other commands are not always under the same menu headings. With Word 6 and Excel 5 they have made big strides towards this goal. Why didn't they include the Creative Writer programming team in this process? For example, you exit most applications through the top left corner - guess where you exit this one? Top right! There seems to be no way to flip objects horizontally or veritcally. This would have been more use than the resizing tools in these dimensions.

There does not seem to be a way to resize the Creative Writer window to jump from one application to another. I have found that always having the clock on and always on top allows me to reach the desktop more quickly than any route offered by the program itself. The program does not support sound through the PC speaker - even when the Windows speaker driver is installed (which will play other Windows sounds) While the sound from the speaker driver is not brilliant it is better than nothing. It is maddening to have sound buttons which appear but do not work.

Printing: This brings back memories of the struggles which went into Windows printing in the old days. Actually asking for it to happen from the program is easy (but very slow - 5 minutes to print a page from a 486) but what you see on the screen is not always what you get. Some of the sample files that come with the program have fonts which come out very differently on my printer.

I do hope that there will be a version 2 with some of these problems ironed out and I would advise potential users to have a look (Microsoft will send you a demo disc) but consider waiting for the update.

---

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*Microsoft are on 0734 270001 for more details or a demo disc.*

*One of the problems with Mircrosoft is that the company is now so big that there seems to be very little communication between its divisions. There have been big strides towards a uniform appearance for the Office products but the Home division seems to be out on its own. Perhaps it doesn't matter - the children that this is aimed may not be using any other Windows programs so the exit button being on the "wrong" side is irrelevant. I would disagree with this - I would like to think that young users are not just "playing" but also developing skills for later use. The exit button is trivial but it's the trivial features which could be absolutely standard without in any way*


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*The way in which formatting is applied is also non standard - you choose a formatting tool and then 'paint' over the text you want to change. I'm prepared to believe that Microsoft spent lots of effort testing the program to see what children did naturally but it just seems to be another area where confusion will arise when they try and swap to another package later. (This is one of the reasons that some people find the switch from Lotus 1-2-3 to Excel difficult; 1-2-3 for DOS requires you to highlight an area after selecting a format, Excel works the way all other Windows applications work).*

*I shouldn't criticise it too much; it is, after all, very cheap - the best price I've seen is £28 plus £2.50 p&p plus VAT from Clive Strudwick. Phone: 0403-732045 or 0403-733833, or email cstrudwick@cix*


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If anyone is interested then do please call - I hate throwing things away! Contact Frank Miller at Broughton High School, Preston tel: 0772 863849 or at home on 0995 604030

*(For new readers, the 480z was the CP/M computer system which RM produced before the PC186 and IBM clones. It was very solidly built and although not able to compete with new computers for many things it might be ideal for simple word processing or control work.)*

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Contact Ray Lovell, Computing Laboratory, Royal Grammar School, Amersham Road, high Wycombe Buckinghamshire, HP13 6QT


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# Making Word for Windows Easier to Use

*Steve Rochford*

One of the features which was new in Word for Windows version 2 was the toolbar. This carried a set of buttons which could carry out commonly used functions with just one button click. It's possible to customise this to add functions which you use frequently - or to make available functions which you might use frequently if only you could find them! This article will show you how you can do this, both for use on a normal computer and also for a network.

The first example will give you direct access to the Thesaurus just like the Spell checker. Click on Tools and then Options. Scroll through the Category list on the left until you find Toolbar. You'll see in the middle of the list a box headed Tool to Change - click on the arrow to the right of this to see a list of the current buttons and what they do. You'll find that there are spaces between some of the tools - you are going to replace one of these spaces with your new Thesaurus button.

When you have decided where you want to add your new button, click on it to make it active. Click on Show Comands and then scroll through the commands until you find Tools Thesaurus - click on it once. Now look at the set of buttons to find one you like and click on Change. Finally click on Close. You should now have a new button on the toolbar - click on it to make sure that it works.

The next example is Word Art. This allows you to put fancy text into your document and it works even if you don't have Windows 3.1. Normally, you would use Word Art by choosing Insert Object from the menu and then finding MS Word Art in the list. It's not obvious and you're unlikely to even try it unless you know it's there! To add it to the toolbar you first of all need to record the set of mouse clicks that makes it happen - this is called recording a macro - and then you attach that macro to a button.

Start up Word but don't type anything. Click on the Tools menu and choose Record Macro. Type Word Art in the Macro Name box and then click in the Description box and type something like *Insert a Word Art picture.* Now click OK.

Everything you do from now on is recorded by Word - try not to make any mistakes!

Click on Insert and then on Object. A list of *object servers* appears - choose MS Word Art and then OK.

The Word Art program loads - this might take some time on a network so be patient! Click OK to finish with Word Art for now and then when the Word Art object appears, click on Tools and then on Stop Recorder.

You've now recorded a macro; now to add it to the toolbar. Click on Tools and then Options. Scroll through the Category list on the left until you find Toolbar. You'll see in the middle of the list a box headed Tool to Change - click on the arrow to the right of this to see a list of the current buttons and what they do. You'll find that there are spaces between some of the tools - you are going to replace one of these spaces with your new Word Art tool.

When you have decided where you want to add your new button, click on it

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to make it active. Click on Word Art in the list of Macros (it may be the only one there!) and then scroll through the set of buttons to find one you like (I chose the piggy bank - any of them would do) and then click on Change. Finally click on Close. You should now have a new button on the toolbar - click on it to make sure that it works.

Assuming that it does work, click on File Save All. You will be asked if you want to save changes to Document 1 - you probably don't (you've only used it to test the Word Art Object) - and then you are asked if you want to save Global Glossary and Command Changes - click on Yes. This saves the file called Normal.dot which is where information about the toolbar and macros is stored.

The only difference if you are working on a network is the process involved in getting the new template distributed to users. What I do is to log on as admin and then make a copy of the normal.dot file in my user area using a new name. I then delete normal.dot from my area and start Word - the MTSL copies normal.dot from the Word directory across to my user area. Follow the instructions as above to create a new normal.dot file on drive N: and then close Word. You now need to copy this file back to p:\rmlib\ww2 (remember to set the file on P: to read-write first, then copy and set it back to read-only). When a new user logs on they will automatically get the new template but to make sure all other users get the new version you must delete their copy of the template. If you are certain that none of your users will have made changes to normal.dot then you can delete all of them by typing

```
RMTREE DEL R:\NORMAL.DOT /E /R
```

and then the next time any user runs Word then will get the new version of the template and toolbar.

You might also like to investigate the document called Newmacro which is in the Winword directory. This contains a number of sample macros such as Drop Capital. If you like any of these then you can choose to add it to a menu and then by saving Normal.dot in the way described above you can make it available to all users.

The final change I have made on my network is to alter the Autoexec macro. This is a special macro which runs automatically every time you start Word. On the network it just prints the message at the bottom of the screen about the foreign language support. I have changed it to turn on auto-save every five minutes and to set the measurment units to inches. (I have several worksheets which specify setting margins or indents in inches - it's hard to do this if the default is cm!) The autoexec macro looks like this:

```
Sub MAIN
ToolsOptionsSave  .AutoSave =
  1, .SaveInterval = "5"
ToolsOptionsGeneral  .Units =
  0
End Sub
```

(note that the two lines beginning Tools should not break in the middle)

Let me know if you have found a good way of making Word easier to use - I hope to have some more ideas in the next issue.

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☆☆☆

# Windows for Workgroups and RM Net LM

*Paul Bramwell*

Ours was one of the very early Net LM systems and was also one of the first to use multiple servers with multiple domains. Despite the early problems with the system we were generally happy running two domains. The largest domain was for general school use (staff & students) and the smaller domain was for the school office and staff administration. Running two domains was not too difficult and offered such attractions as staff being able to access student data from specific stations around school. Security was never an issue and neither was management. However, the second domain was centred round an old VX machine with a mere 170mb hard disc. There were 5 386/25mhz stations in the school office with 70mb hard drives and 4mb of RAM. These stations ran Windows 3.1 from local hard drives and really only used the server for storing files and sharing a laser printer. After some talks with RM I decided to upgrade my VX server for a 1gigabyte system base unit. The idea was then to run the office under Windows for work groups. All of this was supposed to happen last September but I just haven't had time and kept putting things off - until this week.

School broke up last Friday so on Monday morning at the crack of dawn I was in the school office. The first job was to make a full backup of all the files and data. I put a 300mb 486 DX33 station onto the network. After compressing all the relevant files I copied them to the local hard disk - just for security I repeated the backup on a second station. Next I had to de-commission the VX server and reformat it to DOS. I needed advice from RM for this but in essence you simply re-install OS/2 but select the FAT file system instead of HPFS. Apart from the fact that it takes ages the process is easy. That complete I booted the now de-commissioned server from a floppy disc formatted under DOS 6.2.

I then installed DOS 6.2 onto the VX. Incidentally, up to this point all of the stations running from this server had DOS 5. One of my ambitions was to put DOS 6.2 on all of the stations and use Double Space (for obvious reasons). I have heard the horror stories but don't actually now anyone with first hand experience of problems with Double Space.

To cut a long story short let me summarise. By the end of the day I had 6 stations with Windows 3.1, DOS 6.2 and an assortment of Windows software installed. At this stage I had not installed Windows for Work groups. On each station I had run Double Space. I then disabled disk swap (virtual memory) in the control panel of Windows and ran the Dos utility Defrag.

So far, a good days work and all was going well. On Tuesday the gremlins began to get involved. Upgrading the first station to W4WG (Windows for Work Groups) I naively expect everything to go smoothly. Microsoft did their part. The set-up routines were excellent and the documentation easy to understand. The problem was that W4WG could not identify the installed network card. I talked to INSITE support but made no progress. The best they could offer was to reinstall Windows and then upgrade it again to W4WG. Well, when all else fails do what the man suggests. Over an hour later and still no progress. However, someone on the


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hotline passed me to support for schools - I didn't realise there were two different departments.

Now for some real help. I sympathise that INSITE support are concerned primarily with Net LM and generally applaud their efforts. I just wish they would be more ready to admit when they are stuck rather than have me waste my time doing things I am sure will not resolve the problem.

Anyhow, thanks to Rachel, who told me which files to down load from the bulletin board (if you don't use the BB you really should), I got the drivers I needed for the Ethernet cards. Magic doesn't begin to describe how easily everything went from then one.

With W4WG installed on the first station and a Laserjet 4 printer working superbly I created a directory called C:\OFFICE and shared it and the printer. Putting W4WG on the other stations and connecting then to the shares was so easy it was a pleasure. It took less than an hour once the first station was set up to complete all the stations. Passwords for all users, shares issued and tested and everything going like a dream. Or was it?

The first station on the system, the one with the only printer on the network and the one to hold the central bank of data files and word processing was a 486/33 DX with a 300mb hard disk (doubled to nearly 600mb) and 8mb of RAM. It ran like lightening. All the other stations were 386/25mhz with 4mb of ram. Once connected to the network they ran impossibly slowly - so slowly that it was inconceivable to use the network. With panic about to strike I gave up for the day and retired to the local pub.

In the calm of a new day I remembered having switched off 386 enhanced mode disk swapping (virtual memory). I reinstated the virtual memory, ran defrag again and crossed my fingers. Bingo. What I am left with appears to be a tolerably good system. Initial tests suggest that so long as the office staff don't have too many long documents or multiple applications open they will not notice the difference.

My conclusion - open to modification once the office staff start using the network - is that W4WG is a superb product with a lot of potential. I look forward to installing a fax card and sharing it across all users. Its easy of use would be difficult to exaggerate. However, the base machine for such a network should realistically be, in my as yet untested opinion, a 486/33 with 8mb of RAM. The extra disk space is extremely useful but I worry about some of the utilities I have yet to explore. The mail and chat facilities look good but I worry about the temptation to play Hearts across the network - I couldn't resist and only gave up because I couldn't beat the machine.

# Using Super Show and Tell

*Myfanwy Wallace*

Like many educationalists I have found the term "Multimedia" in a variety of syllabi, both as a student and a lecturer. The term concerns me because of the associated costs of CD Drives etc. and upgrades to the rest of the computer - better graphics, for example - which might be required. When I discovered LTS had produced Super Show and Tell, a multimedia authoring package which is supplied on floppy disc and does not need high end hardware, I was intrigued. I became even more interested when I read in their advertisement that there was a refund offered if you could not become familiar with the package.

I've now got a copy of it and for the next few issues I hope to be writing about how I've used it and its potential for other areas of use.

The packages has the facility for you to develop your own storyboard using multimedia tools. My storyboard is of a recent trip to Japan to visit both my son and other educationalists. I have returned with seven films of 36 exposures, 2 audio cassette tapes, numerous postcards and a shoe box full of museum, temple and tourist literature. I had planned to display this information as a storyboard in a diary format but having read the manual and visited Japan, I feel that it would be more sensible to use a map of Japan with the places visited activated by a hot-key.

I read the manual on the flight out to Japan - perhaps the only place you can go without being disturbed by the phone ringing for 12 hours! There are actually two manuals joined together - you start at the front of one to find out about configuration, background knowledge and multimedia terms. Then you turn the manual over and start at the second "front" for the training manual. The language is plain, easy to understand and, like reading cookery books in bed, is inviting you to get up and take part.

I am still concerned about how it is all going to work - I've read that 10 seconds of cassette tape takes up an entire high density floppy disc so how many discs will my presentation require? (I need to be able to move my work from one machine to another relatively easily) I also intend to have some of my photographs developed onto a Photo CD and then copy them to ordinary disc if possible. Doing this I will be able to compare the quality of the picture with a scanned photograph.

I'm now ready to start so in the next issue I will tell you how I got started and installed Show and Tell and made the first moves towards my multimedia presentation on Japan

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*I'm following Myfanwy's experiments with interest; I want to start using an authoring progam which is easy to use and yet capable of sophisticated results. Super Show and Tell looks like it might just do the job. LTS are on 0386 792617. Super Show and Tell costs £79+VAT*


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# Shop Talk

*David Palmer*

First the good news. I have had a very busy month reviewing Textbridge, Disney software and a Sharp Expert Pad ( a member of the Newton family). Textbridge gets the best rating. It is a superb product and if you have never felt brave enough to tackle Optical Character Recognition or, like me, tried it and didn't think it was worth the hassle - well, this is hassle free and at £99 it's cheap too. The Disney software is all aimed at the 10 and under range - although I often saw older students looking wistfully at it. It is all very slick and visually exciting as you would expect. I was surprised at the range of depth between the different programs. It is definitely worth trying to get a test drive to see which suits you. Some, but not all, support the Sound Source, an excellent device that is plugged into the parallel port with a transparent plug so you can still print with it in place. This also comes from Disney. For more information call them on 071 738 8199.

The Expert Pad is a very interesting bit of kit. I do like it and will be sorry to part with it. The interface is very slick and a PC feels very unwieldy afterwards. There are some things that need sorting and I hope that they get sorted and that this ilk of machine survives. I am writing this on my Agenda which did not survive - possibly the Great British trick of being ahead of its time! It is invaluable to me and I would like to think that it might get a viable successor.

I am frustrated with Microsoft Mail. I have just found that students have been logging into other people's mail. Why doesn't Mail pick up the Username of the person who logged onto the machine?? I am also getting ghost images of cancelled print jobs in the next job to be printed. Suggestions for fixes on an e-postcard please.

The more I think about the pricing of technical support, the crosser I get. I am off to an Insite therapy session tomorrow and if I was paying part of £995 for the privilege then I might be banging the table and shouting at people who cannot solve my problems on the spot. As it is I hope that it will be the friendly pooling of ideas that we have had in the past. I suspect that it will not remain that way for long as people who have to pay that amount of money are justified in demanding a very high level of service. Please think this through again, RM. They say they talked to the users but I still haven't met one who favours it.

---

*Supporting a network is a complicated process. Over many years RM have made a good job of it and I hope that they continue to do so. The problem, as I have said before, is the cost. It now costs £995 per year for support for a single server network and something over £2000 for the 'standard' support contract for the four servers which I have and I can't afford it.*

*I think that a better system would be to have a charge per "incident" - perhaps £50 - £100 would be reasonable altough I'd obviously want some kind of guarantee that my problem could be solved. I've no idea how this could be controlled (there are some problems which can't be solved - they're just part of the way the system works - and it's obviously unreasonable to expect RM to diagnose problems if you have made*


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*changes to your system which make it completely non-standard) but I don't think the problems are insurmountable.*

*What I don't want to see is RM ending up like BT - excellent technology but with poor customer relations and unreasonably high prices. Almost every time I speak to individuals at RM they seem to go out of their way to help and yet somehow it doesn't always quite work. One of the things which has most annoyed me is the way the price increases have been handled. Some time ago I was told that someone from the Insite team would be phoning all contract holders, explaining to them the details of the new pricing and what they would get for their money. So far I've had no phone call (but I have had a fax warning me that if I don't pay* ***immediately*** *then I will have to pay a further £50 'reconnection' charge if I do want to continue with support!)*


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# Working with Excel

*Steve Rochford*

Excel has the ability to lock cells so that they can't accidentally be changed. This is useful if you want to set up template sheets, for example for accounts work, or if you want to create a sheet with some basic formulae to be used by pupils in school.

This is what you need to do.

Create your sheet in the normal way.

Now highlight the whole of the sheet and choose Format Cell Protection from the menu

Click on the Locked option to turn *off* locking for all the cells.

Now highlight the areas which you don't want to be changed (normally this will be cells containing formulae or perhaps instructions)

Pick Format Cell Protection again and this time turn on locking.

Finally choose Options Protect Document. You will be asked to type your password twice (just in case you mis-spelled it the first time). Your sheet is now protected and can be saved as normal.

When a user works with the sheet they will be able to enter data into any of the unlocked cells but attempting to change the locked cells will give a warning. If you realise that you need to make changes then you must use Options Unprotect Document and give the password. Note that you must not forget the password - if you do there is no way to change the data! (You can't even copy the spreadsheet using Edit Copy and Edit Paste because when a sheet has been protected Edit Copy only copies the values in a cell, not the formulae!

When Excel starts it looks in a directory called XLSTART off the program directory for any files which it can load and then loads them. For example, if you Excel installed in C:\EXCEL and then put a file called MAIN.XLS in C:\EXCEL\XLSTART then that file will be loaded each time you start Excel. You can use this for storing special formulae you want to use in Excel or for loading macro sheets.

A macro sheet in Excel simply contains a set of instructions you want to execute without carrying them out by hand. I've used them before now to do some repetitve processing on data - I tried doing it to process the Audit file from my network server. You can also use a macro sheet to store functions that you need. For example, Excel does calculations based on angles in radians but most people are more familiar with working in degrees. The conversion between the two is easy (There are $2\pi$ radians in a full circle or roughly 57.29° to 1 radian) and can be automated with a function macro. You are going to make a macro sheet which contains two functions - Degrees which takes a number of radians and gives the equivalent in degrees and radians which does the reverse.

Start Excel and use File New Macro Sheet to get a macro sheet on screen. Enter the following in column A:

```
Degrees
=ARGUMENT("NumberOfRadians")
=NumberOfRadians*57.29
=RETURN(A3)
```

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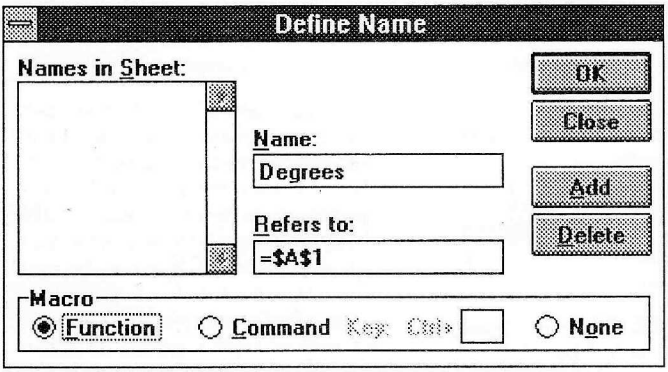
```
Radians
=ARGUMENT("NumberOfDegrees")
=NumberOfDegrees/57.29
=RETURN(A8)
```

Notice that cell A5 is deliberately empty. Now click in cell A1 and choose Formula Define Name from the menu. You should see Degrees is filled in the Name box and $A$1 is in the Refers to box. Click on the Macro Function button to make the dialogue box look like this:




Click OK to close the box and then repeat the process to define A6 as Radians. Save the sheet as FORMULAE in the XLSTART directory and then open a normal worksheet (File New Worksheet).

Click on Formula Paste Function and scroll down to the end of the list - here you will find your two extra functions and they can be used just like normal functions.

The disadvantages of working like this are that the functions do not appear in the proper alphabetical order and the macro sheet has to be open all the time. To get round this you need to save the macro sheet as an Add In. Make the Macro sheet active and click on File Save As. Click the OPtions button and from the File Format list choose Add In. Save the file in the XLSTART directory as Formulae.xla and then close the sheet. You can now delete formulae.xlm from the XLSTART directory. The next time Excel starts it will read the Add In file and do just that - Add In the functions to the normal list and won't make the sheet load and clutter up the workspace.

One of the special macros that you can create is called Auto_Open and this is run everytime a sheet is opened (Auto_Close runs when the sheet is closed). If you create a macro sheet with an Auto_Open macro and then save that sheet in the XLSTART directory then you have a macro which will run every time that Excel starts up. Why would you want such a macro? One reason would be to customise the appearance of the new sheet that appears. Suppose that you don't want to have the row and column headings or the gridlines showing. It should be easy enough to turn them off using the Options Display command but unfortunately Excel saves this information with a particular sheet rather than in its INI file. Try this out:

Start up Excel and then choose File New Macro Sheet.

Enter the following instructions:

```
Auto_Open (a)
=NEW(1)
=DISPLAY(FALSE,FALSE,FALSE,TRUE,
  0,,TRUE,FALSE,1)
=ACTIVATE("Macro1.xlm")
=CLOSE(FALSE)
=RETURN()
```

Save the sheet as MACRO1.XLM (you should be offered this file name as a default) in the XLSTART directory.

Now close Excel and re-start it. You should see the macro sheet load quickly and then disappear. You will be left with a new worksheet which has no headings on the rows and columns and is free of gridlines. This obviously isn't perfect because if the user then chooses File New they will get a normal sheet, complete with unwanted clutter, but it's the best I can think of for now. If you have seen a better way of doing this then please let me know!

(The macro instructions first of all open a new document of type 1 - a worksheet. The Display line sets the appropriate options. Activate brings the macro sheet back to the front and then the close line closes it without saving changes. Return marks the end of the macro.)

# RM USER GROUP 1994 TRAINING WEEKEND

THE 1994 TRAINING WEEKEND WILL TAKE PLACE FROM 21–23 OCTOBER 1994 AT THE NOVOTEL IN NOTTINGHAM

THERE WILL BE THE USUAL MIX OF INTENSIVE TRAINING COURSES INTERSPERSED WITH OPPORTUNITIES TO MEET FELLOW MEMBERS AND DISCUSS WHAT YOU ARE DOING AS WELL AS A CHANCE TO ASK THE HELPFUL PEOPLE FROM RM FOR ADVICE.

MAKE A NOTE OF THE DATE IN YOUR DIARY NOW AND TRY TO ALLOCATE SOME OF YOUR INSET BUDGET TO IT!

MORE DETAILS WILL BE SENT TO YOU AS SOON AS WE HAVE THEM FINALISED.

# RM Net LM Hints and Tips

## Superbase

Superbase 4 was sold for the network as a 16 user version. If, like me, you've bought extra licences to cover the number of stations which you have then you might be disappointed to find that it's not possible to have more than 16 users accessing the same file at the same time. This is because you haven't got (for example) a 32 user version but two 16 user copies. To get round this I've added two special shares on the server and adjusted the MTSL which loads Superbase.

The following instructions assume that you have a directory called COMMON in the Public share - I use this to share all the files which I want pupils to be able to load for exercises. You are going to make two further directories under this and then share them. In my case this common directory has RW access for users to allow for programs such as Superbase which insist on opening files in RW mode even when you specify Read Only! (To make this happen, log on at the server as Admin and type:

```
MD C:\PUBLIC\COMMON
NET ACCESS C:\PUBLIC\COMMON /
  CHANGE USERS:RWX
```

At the server type the following instructions while logged on as Admin:

```
MD C:\PUBLIC\COMMON\SBFILES1

MD C:\PUBLIC\COMMON\SBFILES2

NET SHARE SBFILES1
  =C:\PUBLIC\COMMON\SBFILES1 /
  REMARK:"First 16 Superbase
  users" /PERMISSIONS:"" /
  USERS:16

NET SHARE SBFILES2
  =C:\PUBLIC\COMMON\SBFILES2 /
  REMARK:"Second 16 Superbase
  users" /PERMISSIONS:"" /
  USERS:16

NET SAVE SRVAUTO.PRO /Y
```

(Note that the Net Share lines should be typed without pressing return until after the 16 in each case).

Now log on at a station and edit the Superbase MTSL (MSB4W.EXE if you haven't changed it to look like this:

```
REM MTSL Script for SuperBase

REM Form information:
REM SuperBase
REM 11001010
REM p:\rmlib\sb
REM p:\lib
REM sb4w.exe
REM 999
REM the above information is
  used for form edit, do not
  modify above this line!

cd p:\rmlib\sb
do netdisconnect z:
do netconnect z:
  \\serverx1\sbfiles1
if %returncode%=71
      do netconnect z:
  \\serverx1\sbfiles2
endif
addpath p:\rmlib\sb
chdsk n:
exec p:sb4w.exe
subpath p:\rmlib\sb
cd p:\
do netdisconnect z:
```

The important lines are the netconnect ones - netconnect returns an error of 71 if it failed because the number of users exceeds that set up by the net share command. It would be possible to extend the idea to cope with more than 32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machines (but I don't have that many to test it on!)

I got the idea for coping with more than 16 users in Superbase by looking at the way Applications Manager copes with licence numbers and I've been looking for a way to make the MTSLs that it creates more secure - at the moment the MTSL stops unrestricted users from running the software easily but there's nothing to stop the determined person from running the program directly from its own directory - by writing a macro in Word, for example, or a 1 line program in Visual Basic. To make it harder, I've made a special share on the server for an application which I do not want unlimited users to run (in this case it's Access but it could be anything). Log on at the server and type the following:

```
MD C:\SPECIAL
MD C:\SPECIAL\ACC
NET ACCESS C:\SPECIAL\ACC /
  DELETE
NET ACCESS C:\SPECIAL\ACC /ADD
  USERS:RX
NET SHARE ACC$=C:\SPECIAL\ACC
  /REMARK: "Access Licence
  Directory" /PERMISSIONS:"" /
  USERS:1
NET SAVE SRVAUTO.PRO
```

Now log on at a station and click on File Run and type the command CONNECT Z: \\SERVERX1\ACC$

You should not see anything happen but if you start File Manager you will find that you have a drive Z:. Now install your software in the normal way, but put it in Z:\ rather than C:\<dirname>. What you've done is to create a special, hidden share on the server - even if someone has access to File Manager and browses shares on the server they will not see the share name. Similarly, using Net View at the DOS prompt will not show hidden shares.

Your MTSL needs to look something like:

```
do netdisconnect z:
do netconnect z:
  \\serverx1\acc$
if %returncode%=71
      echo Licence limit
  exceeded - try again later
exit
addpath z:\
chdsk n:
exec z:\msaccess.exe
subpath z:\
chdsk n:
do netdisconnect z:
```

Note that both the above examples require the use of drive Z: - some of the RM management utilites make temporary use of this drive and you could well find that your MTSL or the RM program will crash if you try and run them both at the same time. I have not found any problems for normal users who do not need drive Z: but, obviously, you could not run Superbase and Access at the same time using the examples above. I am prepared to put up with this limitation - if you are not then I'm not sure what you can do - the point of using a fixed drive letter (rather than letting the MTSL find a free one as the normal application manager script does) is to let you say to pupils "Open the file called xxxx on drive Z:" and to let you install software which frequently refers to its installed drive in INI files etc.

In the last issue Paul Bramwell referred to the idea of using the AT command to allow or disallow access to certain programs (such as games). What his suggestions did was to prevent users from seeing the directories which contained the games but anyone who knows the names of the programs can get at them by using the full path name. An alternative technique might be to use the

AT command to run a batch file to block access to all the EXE or COM files in the games directories.

If a program does not have an explicit Access Control List then it "inherits" the ACL set for its parent directory but does not have its own ACL created- this means that if you copy a file into a subdirectory of C:\PUBLIC then it will effectively have RX access rights for all users. You need to change this by explicitly creating an ACL for each program and then changing it at the appropriate times.

Suppose that you have just the two Windows games, Sol.exe and Reversi.exe and that they are in c:\public\games. To create th initial ACLs, type:

```
net access
  c:\public\games\sol.exe /add
  users:rx
net access
  c:\public\games\reversi.exe /
  add users:rx
```

Now create two text files in C:\lanman\netprog called gameson.cmd and gamesoff.cmd which will look something like:

```
rem gameson.cmd
net access
  c:\public\games\sol.exe /
  grant users:rx
net access
  c:\public\games\reversi.exe /
  grant users:rx

rem gamesoff.cmd
net access
  c:\public\games\sol.exe /
  revoke users
net access
  c:\public\games\reversi.exe /
  revoke users
```

Now set up the timed events with the following commands:

AT 13:00 /every:w,f gameson

AT 14:15 /every:w,f gamesoff

(This will allow games to be played every Wednesday and Friday between 1pm and 2.15pm - adjust them as appropriate)

At this point the games are "on" - type Gamesoff to turn them off and then check that they do not run from a station (note that you must not log on as admin to check - an admin user can access files no matter what the ACLs are set to). Back at the server, type gameson and then return to the station to check that they are back on. Finally turn them off with gamesoff and leave the system to run itself.

The two CMD files can be easily extended to allow for more games to be included - it shouldn't be necessary to included all of the files, just the EXE or COM file which loads the game.

If you want to set up a specific desktop for a "special" machine on your network then a much better idea than the one in the last RM User is to edit Progmanr.exe to find the line which says set ln=%1. After it add the following:

```
if %ln%=
  if %netaddr%= <net address>
    set ln=cddesk
  endif
endif
```

where <net address> needs to be replaced with the 12 digit ethernet address and cddesk is the name of the new desktop - thanks to Desmond Hamilton from Morrison's Academy for pointing this out.

# A Network Function in Visual Basic

*Mark Burch*

I'd like to use Visual Basic to write network utilities like David Taylor's wnetdsk or the Who program for Net LM that Edhitec are distributing free with demo copies of their network programs. Although I haven't got very far yet I have discovered how to read the network username into my programs. Here is a simple program which gets the username and displays it in the program's titlebar.

Put the following declaration in the general declarations section of the form or in a module.

```
Declare Function WNetGetUser%
  Lib "USER" (ByVal User As
  String, BufSize As Integer)
```

This is one of the Windows wnet functions. It is listed in the Windows 3.1 API but seems to work fine under Windows 3.0 too. Put the following function in your form.

```
Function GetUser () As String
Dim ReturnCode As Integer,Size
  As Integer, UserName As
  String
GetUser = "Not logged on to
  network"
UserName = String$(255, 0)
Size = Len(UserName)
ReturnCode =
  WNetGetUser%(UserName, Size)
If ReturnCode = 0 Then GetUser
  = Left$(UserName, Size - 1)
End Function
```

Note that if run on a non-network machine, ReturnCode is non-zero and the GetUser function returns "Not logged on to network". If you don't truncate Username it is a 255-byte string which causes all sorts of problems. I know, I tried!

Finally, to display the username, the Form Load procedure should look like this.

```
Sub Form_Load ()
Caption = "Username: " &
  GetUser()
End Sub
```

I am using this function in a network chat program that I've written. By using the network username, students cannot use an alias so they can be held responsible for the messages they send.

I haven't managed to access any other network information from VB yet, but I'm working on it. If anyone out there would like to write an article on accessing other network functions from VB then I, for one, would be an eager reader.

---

*Note that in the program samplesyou should only press return when the next line starts flush with the left margin - Visual Basic often has long lines of code which don't fit very well with the narrow columns!*

*Microsoft produce a programmer's toolkit which gives access to all the Lan Manager functions. It comes with a few sample applications, including a User Manager program (which is a good source of code ideas but should* ***not*** *be used on an RM Network to actually edit users - it doesn't know about the RM additions and could cause chaos.*

*Let me know if you would like to see more information about programming for the network or just about Visual Basic progamming in general.*


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# Testing Network Cables

*Robert Coleman*

One of the biggest problems with network cables are Intermittent Faults. What follows is a strategy for finding them.

My first test is to switch on all the stations in a room together and give every piece of cable a firm pull as they are booting. A dodgy connection is usually found that way.(The stations all freeze before the logon screen when you find it).

Before everyone says "That's not much of a proper test..." it is a practical method when you have had a problem and not been able to identify it. On one occasion, in one room 7 BNC's had been turned so they were released but not quite pulled out. This was deliberate sabotage and occured with a new teacher who was not aware of the details of networks. The problem showed up the next day when the first group started to use the room and someone happened to move a terminal about 1cm. When you are confident that nothing will fall out with a moderate tug to the cable (including BNC's coming off cables) then it is probably the time to have the cabling properly tested.

The real answer is summed up by "Jacob Swafax" when he says that every joint must be made carefully and without hurrying. He is also absolutely correct in saying that crimped joints are far less reliable than soldered joints! The main problem is that good soldering requires a lot of practice and preferably years of experience. Carefully fitted crimped connectors are better if you are not really good and thoroughly experienced with a soldering iron. So long as you use cable strippers carefully set for the ethernet cable from the same supplier (and reset the cable stripper if you change supplier) and then take great care with each crimp you will most likely have cables that are more reliable than some of the "ready made" leads. I've had a few duff ready made leads from RM (3) and a few duff ones from EVERY other supplier tried as well!

I tend to trust the connections made without any hurry more than any ready made stuff. However, when problems do arise the best approach always seems to be to isolate individual cards in the server(s) and then individual LANs from the repeaters until faults are isolated and traced. Usually it is a case of a pupil or teacher disconnecting in ignorance or sometimes a pupil disconnecting deliberately. The repeaters here are excellent for showing faults because a red warning LED comes on for each specific LAN showing "Partition" and as they are set up not to pass the error back to the server (or any other LAN) they are in effect like "buffers", so the rest of the network carries on safely while we go and look for the "Partition" in the specific LAN concerned. Recently I have started wrapping the tee pieces and plugs with self amalgamating tape, particularly where computers are on trollies, so that users always disconnect properly from the back of the computer and nowhere else.

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# Micro Mart

**For Sale:**

- 13 x PC186 computers, all with Ethernet cards, latest firmware versions, Net LM Boot ROMs, colour VDUs and 1Mb RAM. Mixture of diskless, single and double floppy drives; some 84-key, some 102-key.
- 17 x 1Mb RAM cards for M-series 386/16 machines. Useful if you want to upgrade a 286 or 386/16 machine from 1Mb to 2Mb.
- Sytos card plus software plus 60Mb tape streamer plus 8 tapes from Net 3.1 X-series server.
- Epson FX-85 9-pin printer.
- Tandata TM512 modem, configured for BBC computer (whatever that is).
- Timeworks Publisher v2 software.
- Various A/AS-level textbooks, including 4 copies of each of *Computer Science 2nd edn.* (Bishop) and *Computing and Information Technology* (Deeson)
- 12 copies of ITEM Self-Instructional Guide to *Multiplan*
- 8 copies of ITEM Self-Instructional Guide to *Word for DOS*

and, last (and very firmly least),

- RM 380Z computer, with 2 x 5.25" drives. Unknown RAM, may have interesting add-on cards inside.

No reasonable offer refused on any item.

Contact Martyn Wilson at Malvern Girls' College on 0684 892391 or via RM BBS.

**For Sale:**

40 power adaptors (240VAC - 12VDC) 650mA fused. New - still in original boxes. £5 each or offers

40 Ethernet/IEEE 802.3 Coax to 10 Base T converters (Milan Technology Model Mil 100A) £10 each or offers

2 (New) Ethernet cards for M-Series (RM Part No 022-341) offers

10 M-Series MCA Bus Upgrades (RM Part No 028-024) offers

1 Data Communications Card for PC186 offers

Contact: Keith Kilkenny at Aylward School, Windmill Road, Edmonton, London N18 1NB Tel: 081 803 1738

**Wanted:**

Do you have any old RM computers or technical manuals? Lesley Andrews is arranging a shipment of them for use in teaching in Romania, particularly in Univeristies and other HE establishments.

Can you help?

If you have any 380z or 480z computers which you no longer use or if you have any manuals gathering dust in the cupboard then please contact Lesley Andrews on 0844 351153. If you are in a school and you want to know more about Romania then she has a video available and could also give a talk about the need for computers.

# RM User Group Magazine Volume 8 Index

*Compiled by Stephen Sharrad.*

This index should include everything which has been printed in the last six issues of RM User. A quick look at the index shows a quite varied range in subject content. Remember, it is YOUR magazine. Keep those articles coming!

Note that the index is on a subject/ topic basis and not necessarily by article title.


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*Once again, thanks to Stephen for creating the index. If anyone wants back issues then write to me, Steve Rochford at the address in the back. You are also welcome to the text of any magazine in PageMaker 5 format if you send me a disc (each file is about 1Mb in size)*

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## *Your* Magazine

I really do welcome items for the magazine from anyone. You don't have to be a great writer to send something in; send a letter or a short tip for the Hints and Tips pages, everything is welcome. If you want to phone and talk something over then please do; even if you aren't sure how to write something down then I can always include your ideas in Hints and Tips or as a plea for help; some of you will recognise your phone calls on the Hints and Tips pages!

I would be particularly pleased to hear from the people who are using RM computers at home; there are quite a lot of you out there. Some of you will be experienced at working with computers and I would be interested to know why you chose RM for home use. Others will have responded to RM's advertising, perhaps because your children use the same computers at school. How are you getting on with your new machine? Did you have any problems getting started? It doesn't matter if you still don't know the answer to the problem- this is how you'll find out - and it doesn't matter if you think that your problem was trivial; remember that there are many other people who are going to be in exactly the same position as you and will welcome the help that you can give.

If you are writing for me then the ideal is to send me a disc produced using Word or Word for Windows but I can cope with any word processor that runs on a PC or Nimbus (I think). If what you are sending is short then a letter on good old fashioned paper is fine. I can also accept articles left on the bulletin board - the easiest way to to do this is to prepare your article in a word processor and save it normally. You then send a short e-mail to me and attach your file to it when you are on-line. It's actually easier to do than to describe because the whole thing is menu driven.

Finally, we pay for published articles at the rate of £5 per printed page (although all payments are at the Editor's discretion).

## Advertising in the Magazine

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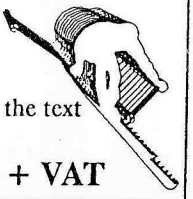

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